

# **KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

## **STAFF NOTE**

### **Review Item:**

Access, Quality and Participation in Dual Credit Programs

### **Applicable Statute or Regulation:**

704 KAR 3:305

### **History/Background:**

***Existing Policy.*** Dual credit programs allow high school students to simultaneously earn credit towards a high school diploma and a postsecondary degree or certificate. Credit based transition programs are an important strategy for improving high school achievement and preparing students for successful transition to postsecondary education. While such programs have existed for many years, they have been used primarily to accelerate the progress of high achieving college-bound youth who are already prepared for college-level work. More recently, there has been an effort to use such courses and programs to facilitate college access and success for middle performing or even lower performing students. Programs included or considered to be dual credit include: Advanced Placement (AP); International Baccalaureate (IB); Tech Prep; Middle and early college high schools; and dual credit courses.

The argument for dual credit courses advances a variety of reasons how such programs serve students including:

- Prepare students for the academic rigors of college
- Provide more realistic information to students about the skills they will need to succeed in college
- Help high school teachers and administrators prepare their students for the college experience
- Expose traditionally non-college bound students to college
- Provide curricular options for students
- Improve motivation through high expectations
- Lower the cost of postsecondary education for students
- Promote institutional relationships between college and high schools

In Kentucky, dual credit enrollment is not limited by a statewide policy to students with certain minimum grade point averages or test scores. In 2000, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) revised existing policy including threshold admissions criteria, and since that time dual credit has grown rapidly. According to CPE, the growth of dual enrollment has almost doubled from 9,321 in 2001-02 to 18,291 in 2003-04.

With similar intent to increase access and participation, the 2002 Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 74 that directed each secondary school-based decision making council to offer a core curriculum of advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, dual credit or dual enrollment. The same legislation requires school councils to adopt policies that encourage participation in credit based transition programs among all students, with special emphasis on minority students and low-income students.

The Kentucky Board of Education (KBE), at its December 2004 meeting, received a report from a small task group led by Dr. Nicholas Brake of the Owensboro Community and Technical College. The task group was charged with examining access and quality in dual credit and bringing identified issues and recommendations to the Board. The group brought forward twelve issues for Board consideration. Since that time, several of those issues have been resolved by Board action and policy clarification from the Department. For instance, Board action on 704 KAR 3:305 identifies dual credit courses as one type of experience for which schools may grant high school credit under performance based credit policies. Similarly, Board action on the pupil attendance regulation makes it possible for schools to receive the average daily attendance (ADA) funding for the proportionate share of the school day that students are engaged in dual credit courses, even if they are not physically present at the school. The emphasis in the new minimum high school graduation requirements on the Individual Learning Plan (ILP), supported by the GoHigherKy web portal and the web-enabled ILP, provide important policy and supporting mechanisms to ensure that all students and their parents are advised about how to plan for and take advantage of dual credit opportunities. Key issue areas that have yet to be addressed in a comprehensive way focus on rigor, access and affordability.

Although the growth has been rapid, there has been very little actual data available about the dual credit experience for Kentucky's students. Generally, we know that the most rapid growth has been in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and that the majority of dual credit courses are technical or occupational in nature. We know very little, however, about the impact of dual credit course taking on persistence and time-to-degree, who is taking the courses, or about the quality and rigor of the courses. According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS)<sup>1</sup>, the U.S. Department of Education claims "college credits earned prior to high school graduation reduce the average time-to-degree and increase the likelihood of graduation for the students who participate in these programs." On the other hand, the ECS brief cites continuing controversy among policymakers about whether dual enrollment dilutes quality and whether the systems for dual credit "shut out low-income and low-achieving students."

The Council on Postsecondary Education recently concluded a Dual Enrollment Study based on administrative enrollment data submitted by the institutions in 2001-05 and a Dual Enrollment Survey administered in the public and independent postsecondary institutions. The survey includes questions related to enrollment, recruitment, admissions criteria, courses offered, location and availability, credits, instructor status and qualifications, and costs and funding. The results of the Study and Survey are to be released on March 29<sup>th</sup> but are not available at the time of the writing of this staff note. When released, those results will be made available to the Board for consideration as part of this agenda item.

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<sup>1</sup> ECS Policy Brief, *Dual/Concurrent Enrollment*, March 2006.

### **Policy Issue(s) and Options:**

The Kentucky Board of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) and the statewide P16 Council are each studying the issues surrounding dual credit. In addition to the actions previously mentioned, recent policies and new developments position the state to move toward a more comprehensive policy. The expectations gap between high schools and colleges is being closed by the work on P16 standards alignment, revisions to the Kentucky Core Content for Assessment and Program of Studies, the proposed addition of 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade diagnostic tests with appropriate interventions in high schools, and implementation of the CPE Uniform Placement Policy. Implementation of the unique student identifier and common course codes will allow the state to collect data about the courses students are taking in high school, the dual credit courses in which they are enrolling, and the number and type of dual credit courses that they are completing. The Education Cabinet joint budget proposal would provide funding to enhance CPE's ability to collect and report data about admissions and placement criteria, courses being offered, and credits earned throughout the system.

Based on preliminary information from the CPE Dual Credit survey, colleges report the chief obstacle to offering college courses to high school students as lack of available, interested instructors. Schools and districts bring forward funding for fees and tuition as the chief obstacle to student participation.

There are several districts in Kentucky who are engaged, with the Secondary Schools Alliance, in reforming their high schools where dual credit is embedded in the new design as an explicit transition mechanism to ensure postsecondary readiness and success. These schools are working with local colleges and universities to construct agreements through which they will share responsibility for dually enrolled students and work together on student/parent outreach, teaching, advising and student support services. As an example, a description of the Kenton County redesign is attached. It is important to note that Kenton County is in discussion with the Department and with local partners to add a five-year option within each School of Study that would result in a high school diploma and an Associate Degree. The primary obstacle they are facing is how to fund the fifth year experience. Their goal is to provide this opportunity to qualifying students at no cost to the student or family.

Florida, Minnesota, New York, Utah and Washington have comprehensive statewide policies on dual credit and programs that provide a student with the opportunity to participate in dual credit courses at no cost. Some provide support on a course-by-course basis, some engage the students in comprehensive programs for particular Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees, and some offer open enrollment opportunities to any college course for which they qualify.

The Kentucky Department of Education proposes that the Board support the formation of a joint task force with representation from the Department of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Education Professional Standards Board, the Department for Workforce Investment, local districts, and public and independent institutions. The task force would examine the need for a comprehensive policy and make recommendations in the broad issue areas of rigor, access, affordability and program evaluation.

**Impact on Getting to Proficiency:**

There is a research base that tells us participation in dual credit programs eases the transition between high school and college. Dual credit may be a key strategy for improving Kentucky's graduation, college-going and degree attainment rates.

**Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:**

Groups consulted included:

- Owensboro Small Work Group/Dr. Nicholas Brake have studied the issue of dual credit and have identified further research areas identified in this staff note.
- The Council on Postsecondary Education and the P-16 Council have engaged in discussions focusing on dual credit and their positions and actions are discussed in this staff note.

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**Deputy Commissioner**

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**Commissioner of Education****Date:**

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